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Inquiry Causes Obstructed

His Proformation

By Mr. Bowdloves

Is. Allan

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Enquiry
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A N
I N Q U I R Y
I N T O T H E
C A U S E

Which obstructed the

R E F O R M A T I O N,

And hath hitherto prevented its Progress:

And a few short OBSERVATIONS, which
prove that the Prophecies relative to the Corruption
of the Christian Church, and the Man of
Sin or Antichrist, are fulfilled in the Romish
Religion and the Popes of Rome.

W I T H

A n A D D R E S S

To the Gentlemen born in this Free Nation, and
who profess that Religion.

By

Philip Bendlowes Esq.

L O N D O N:

Printed for T. BECKET and P. A. DE HONDT, in the Strand;
and Messrs. TODD and SOUTHERAN, in York.

M D C C L X V I I I.

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S U A O

REFORMATION



P R E F A C E.

Beware of Wolves in Sheeps cloathing.

THE Roman Catholics who reside among us, not content to enjoy the christian privilege of serving God their own way in a private manner, but taking advantage of the indulgence the Government hath shewn to their brethren in North America, by granting a Romish bishop to reside and exercise ecclesiastical authority amongst them, clamour for a public toleration of their religion in these kingdoms. And whether their numbers be so increased, as to make them apprehend that this is the time they can force such a concession, or whether the divisions amongst our great men inspire them with the consummate boldness to intimate such their demands, even in the common news papers, at a time when the principles of that religion are become more odious, is best known to themselves. But these cunning and crafty men know how to turn every favourable in-

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cident to their advantage, and observing a general indifference in the ruling clergy, and every other order of men as to religion; and that the love of money and pleasure occupies every breast, and leaves no room for religious considerations: And that their religion is well adapted to please the lazy, vicious and wicked, and particularly the ignorant multitude who are caught by outward shew, so if they could succeed to have a licence of publicly exhibiting their devout mummeries and raree shews, now the age is so fond of all theatrical representations and pageantry, it would go nigh to extirpate the reformed religion, at least among the lower class of people, who being become good Roman Catholics, might assist in another massacre of the Protestants.—It is true their writers, Lord Taaf, Mr. Philips, and the author under the lying character of a Friend to Truth, appear in their writings as innocent harmless lambs, who would not hurt a hair on the head of a Protestant; and especially the letters in several papers of the London Chronicle insinuate, that Roman Catholics may be faithful subjects in a Protestant state, and instances several persons, who in a military capacity have fought and lost their lives in the defence of a Protestant king,

king, and that all Protestant nations admit Roman Catholics in their armies, who have behaved faithfully, and some of them even a public exercise of the Romish religion. Be it so; but ought this to be an inducement to this nation, who beyond all other Protestant nations on earth have so severely felt the diabolical rage of those wicked men constantly conspiring the ruin of us? Ought we to permit the public exercise of a religion whose principles are destructive to a Protestant state? For though a few individuals, whatever their religious principles may be, behave well, and be faithful to the trust reposed in them by a Protestant power, as many of the Mahometan religion have set glorious examples, yet no considerate man would, on account of a few good Mahometans, wish to see a permission of the public exercise of that religion; or on account of a few good Roman Catholics, think the Romish religion less dangerous; seeing wherever that religion hath the power, it remains a fundamental principle of it to extirpate Heresy; so it may happen when they have not the power to disturb a Protestant state, that the Roman Catholics remain quiet, and from such behaviour presume to call themselves good subjects: But let us not

be deceived by such pretences, as all those who do not play the hypocrite with God and man, and of which we in charity ought to suppose, consisteth the greatest number, such cannot, acting consistent with their religious principles, be true or faithful subjects in Protestant states.

* *No man*, as the divine author of the christian religion assures us, *can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other.* Now every Roman Catholic is exactly in the above situation: He owes spiritual allegiance to a foreign power, the Pope of Rome, and acknowledges him as his master, as the visible representative of his God, as one who is guided, and under the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit, so that he cannot err in any of his decisions or commands, and that he is invested with an authority either to forgive his sins, and assure him eternal happiness in another state, or to retain his sins, and assign him over to everlasting torments and damnation in another state: To this master every Roman Catholic, from self interest, will naturally hold and adhere to; and as this master hath de-

* St. Luke, ch. xvi. ver. 13.

clared,

clared, that all those who do not profess every article of faith he professes, are heretics, enemies to God, and in a state of damnation, and ought to be extirpated; so if he issues out his commands for that purpose to his subjects, and absolves them of all their engagements or oaths taken to the Protestant state in which they reside, they cannot refuse to obey such commands, without incurring, according to the belief of the romish faith, eternal damnation. This is the principle and hath been the practice of the romish church, as all history testifyeth. Wherefore, though the present generation do endeavour by their writers to deny this principle, yet we may say, * *Wo unto you hypocrites, who say, Had we been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets; so ye are witnesses to yourselves, that ye are the children of them who killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.* Nay it is utterly impossible that an heretical kingdom can hope for better usage than the kings and princes of their own communion, who have discovered such wicked principles in a chief order of their priesthood; an order who assumed

• St. Mat. ch. xxiii. ver. 30, 31, 32.

the name of the order of Jesus Christ, and approved and confirmed by the infallible head of the church, the Pope: An order who had the highest honour of being father confessors, and have had the guidance and direction for the space of two hundred years of the consciences of all the kings of those kingdoms out of which they are now banished.

Let any one judge what must be the principles of that religion, where such an order of priests are arrived to that height of wickedness, as to hold principles so detrimental to the welfare of mankind, as that they cannot be suffered to remain amongst the people of their own communion, but are for ever banished and driving about on the watry element, being refused admittance so much as to rest the soles of their feet in any of the Pope's dominions. Is it by the assistance of these banished miscreants, that the Roman Catholics amongst us are emboldened to claim a public exercise of a religion which produces such parricides as to deserve so public and infamous banishment.

Had we not reason to expect that my lords the bishops, with their clergy, would have exerted themselves to petition his Majesty that particular and strict care might be
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taken at all the sea ports that these wicked priests, banished out of the nations of their own communion, might not steal in amongst us, with prayers that a proclamation might be issued out that all the Jesuits who are lurking here or in Ireland do forthwith depart, and never return on pain of high treason; yet we have had no intimation of any such petition being presented by the church powers: They seem careless and negligent, acting as hirelings who care not for the flock, but leave them exposed, and a prey to ravenous wolves, whilst they are contending with one another about establishments and subscriptions to human inventions.

But it is not from the Jesuits only that our danger arises, but likewise from those other swarms of romish priests who are suffered to reside amongst us; as every private gentleman of the romish religion assumes the liberty of having a priest in his house, and who appearing in lay habits have the better opportunity to rove about the country, and ingratiate themselves by officious kindnesses with the lower kind of people, and when they find any favourable opportunity, such as misfortunes, poverty or sickness, and when the mind is most susceptible of impressions, to embrace every offer

of assistance, then do these men succeed in seducing and perverting many ignorant Protestants to their religion, and so act a part among us as much to the detriment of the welfare of this nation, as the Jesuits are said to have done in those nations out of which they are banished; so that the well-being and interest of the British dominions seem equally to require that all the romish priests, of what order or denomination soever, as it is impossible to distinguish which of them are Jesuits, and as the principles in the main are the same, their hatred to heretics, and springing from the same root that the Jesuits do, namely the corrupt antichristian church, should as enemies to this state be for ever banished. But as we profess a religion which teaches that every man ought to enjoy the christian liberty of serving God according to the dictates of his own conscience, and as the romish religion is of such a nature and composition, that its professors cannot serve God even in private, without the aid of a priest; it seems necessary, that though the state, consistent with the welfare of the people in general, and for the reasons before mentioned, cannot permit a public exercise of that religion, yet it may, for the sake of our weak brethren, and to avoid all
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imputation of imitating the persecuting spirit of the romish religion, admit some priests of that religion to reside amongst us, under proper regulation, as that every gentleman or lady purposing to keep a romish priest, shall take out a licence, in which the name, age and order he is of, by way of affidavit, to avoid any of the jesuitical order to creep in amongst us, shall be mentioned; and the persons taking out such licence shall, with another surety, enter into recognizance to the king, under the penalty of some considerable sum, that the priest will not, by any means whatever, endeavour to seduce, turn or pervert any Protestant man, woman, youth or child to the Romish religion, or in any other manner practise against the State, nor send any children abroad for education; and that such recognizance and licence be inrolled at the quarter sessions of the county where the person taking out such licence inhabits, and that from the day of its inrollment both the real and personal estate of such persons shall be bound and take place of all mortgages, judgments or other securities, however distinguished; and that on the conviction of any licenced priest having endeavoured to seduce any Protestant, no further licence be granted to the recognizee

x P R E F A C E.

nizee to keep any priest: And that such licenced priest shall have the education of the male children, and proper persons licenced for the education of the females; and that such priest shall be distinguished by some proper habit, and be under the protection of the law against insult or ill usage *.

Such

* Since the writing of the above, I have met with some essays under the name of Crito, who in his Preface to his second volume declares it his opinion, that a public toleration of the romish faith ought to be allowed, and the refusing of it is an act of tyranny in the government; and endeavours to support such his opinion, with a shew of reasoning, and as founded on christian principles.—But though on the principles of christian liberty, every individual hath a right, and ought not to be molested of serving the supreme Being in such a manner as to his understanding seems the best; yet it by no means followeth, that every individual hath a right to a public toleration of his private religion; especially when it fundamentally contradicts the established religion of the nations, which declares that all divine worship ought only to be paid to the supreme Being, whereas the romish religion teaches, that divine worship ought to be paid to other beings besides God. Now should the government by law allow a public toleration, or profession of the romish religion, it would by law establish or countenance idolatry, and put a snare and temptation in the way of the lower and ignorant, to entice them to idolatry.

There certainly is a proper and great distinction to be observed between persecution, and approbation and indulgence; and it were to be wished, that the word persecution was so clearly and precisely defined, as to meet with the general approbation of mankind; seeing persecution in its proper and strict sense, seems only applicable

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Such or any other christian precaution, with regard to those romish priests who are to be licenced, may in some measure prevent the evil of Popery from spreading amongst the lower and ignorant people, and perhaps preserve to us the light of the reformation, unless the reformed doctors stifle that light,

cable to such persons who are punished for their private religious opinions, who do not interfere or obstruct the public welfare. But if the principles of any religion be destructive of the established government, it would be the highest folly in the government to tolerate such a religion with a public profession, and which is the case of the romish, or else it would undoubtedly have met with the same indulgence other religious sects do amongst us, had they not, and still do, by the principles of their religion, profess allegiance to a foreign power; and in consequence of such foreign allegiance, contrive the destruction of the Protestant religion and government.

So that all the severe penal laws made in queen Elizabeth and king William's reign, were occasioned by their rebellious principles, of constant endeavouring to extirpate the Protestant religion and government, and in which, though they have not succeeded, yet by obliging us to run into an immense national debt, for the support of the Protestant religion and government, they have brought a lasting oppression of taxes, and perhaps utter ruin on this nation.—No one therefore can, with the least shadow of justice or equity, charge the government with a persecuting spirit, in obliging persons of such principles to pay either a double land-tax, or any other tax towards the support of that government which protects them in the enjoyment of their estates, though they daily endeavour to subvert the government, by withdrawing the lower kind of people to a foreign allegiance.

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and prevent its progress : For though many corrupt branches of the romish church have been lopped off, just as the present Pope hath unniched many a saint, yet the true root of Popery remains in the Protestant churches, and particularly in ours, and which root is dug about, manured and watered, for its better thriving, by many eminent doctors, who cannot bear the thoughts that this old root should decay. And as some attempts have lately been made to dig up a root from which so much corrupt fruit hath sprung, it hath made our doctors more anxious to preserve it from rotting, so that many conscientious good men, who have pointed out some of the corrupt doctrines, have by scurrilous and ill usage, given over all further endeavours to forward a reformation, and taken leave, under pretence that the times will not bear an inquiry after religious truth; and others have been silenced, and by such means the conscientious part of the clergy are deterred and prevented from engaging in the defence of a further reformation. If therefore those who are entrusted by God and their country with the care of Christ's flock, and to support the Reformation, do not only most shamefully neglect this their duty, but even maintain the foundation on which all
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the corrupt doctrines in the christian church are founded, it is hoped, that without offence, a private christian (desirous to free the amiable religion of Jesus Christ from those corrupt doctrines, introduced by the invention of selfish wicked men, who have blended that holy religion with such lies and fables, as render it a scorn to infidels, and a stumbling block to many good christians) may point out the chief foundation of all the corrupt doctrines subsisting in the christian church, under the following propositions.

P R O P O S I T I O N I.

That a claim in the christian clergy, to exercise rule or dominion over their brethren in matters of faith, is contrary to the express command of the divine Author of that religion, subversive of all true religion, and the foundation on which the popes of Rome and their priests, have built all the corrupt doctrines now existing in the christian church.

P R O P O S I T I O N II.

That the heads, or leading men in the Reformation, deviating from the principles they

they at first laid down, as the foundation of the Reformation; namely, that the scriptures ought to be the sole rule and guide to every christian's faith, and returning to the antichristian principles of the romish church, in imposing human inventions and explanations, as the word of God, obstructed the Reformation, and hitherto prevents its progress.

PROPOSITION III.

That the prophecies relative to the corruption of the christian church and the man of sin, or antichrist, are fulfilled in the romish religion and the popes of Rome.

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P R O P O S I T I O N I.

That a claim in the christian clergy to exercise rule or dominion over their brethren in matters of faith, is contrary to the express command of the divine Author of that religion, subversive of all true religion, and the foundation on which the popes of Rome and their priests, have built all the corrupt doctrines now existing in the christian church.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ having severely reprehended the jewish doctors, for having by their inventions, explanations and traditions, rendered the word of God of no effect; and for their arrogant pride in suffering themselves to be called rabbi, or masters, addresses himself to his disciples, who were to propagate the christian religion, in these words.

words. * *Be ye not called rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.* Thus we are assured that every christian's master in religious matters is Christ, and that those whom he entrusted with the propagation of the christian religion have no authority over our faith, but are to be accounted only as our brethren. *And when a strife arose among the disciples who should be the greatest, their Master said unto them, † The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. ‡ But so shall it not be among you.* And on occasion of his having washed their feet, he said unto them, || *Know ye what I have done unto you? Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If then I your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one anothers feet; for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you: Verily verily I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* And happy indeed had it been for the christian church, if the christian clergy had observed the commands and advice of their Lord, who intended not that his religion should be founded on the wicked principles of human dominion, but that the obedience to his laws should proceed from the conviction of the mind or reason, and not from a coercion of temporal force: How therefore the christian clergy could even in the earliest ages of christianity, disregard the command of their divine Master, and arrogantly claim a right to exercise dominion over their brethren, is difficult to be conceived, though highly to be lamented; seeing

* St. Mat. xxiii. 8.

† St. Luke, xxii. 25, 26.

‡ St. Mark, x. 43.

|| St. John, xiii. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

on such an impudent claim have the popes of Rome and their priests founded the most tyrannic kingdom that ever existed on earth; and the working heads of ambitious priests introduced more diabolical mischief, than perverted religion, in the most depraved state of mankind, had ever yet effected.

Thus the assumed antichristian authority was immediately productive of two maxims: The first, that it was a virtue to deceive and lie, when by that means the interest of the church, that is the interest of the priests, who call themselves the church, might be promoted; and the other was that errors in religion, that is, whatever the priests would be pleased to call errors, when maintained and adhered to, after proper admonition, were punished with civil penalties and temporal tortures.

Here we have the rise of the spirit of persecution, and the foundation of all the corrupt doctrines which have long existed, and still continue, in the Christian church.

If it seems strange, that the clergy could ever entertain the hope or confidence to obtrude such a claim on their brethren, it ought to be considered, that the christian revelation remained in manuscript for one thousand five hundred years; and being mostly in the hands of the clergy, they made known only so much of it as they pleased, and often imposed their own inventions, as the word of God. But it is really surprizing, that after the invention of printing, when the scriptures came into the hands of the laity, and the light of the reformation had opened the eyes of those who were blinded by a superstitious reverence to receive the impositions of the clergy as the word of God, that

now in this age, a claim to exercise dominion over their brethren in matters of faith, should be avowed in express opposition to their Lord's command, exhibits a melancholy proof of the extream depravity of the human mind, and the great corruption prevailing in those who are peculiarly obliged, by their sacred office, to exemplary obedience. For the servants have divested their Lord of his dominion over his christian subjects, and substituted themselves in his place, by exacting obedience from their christian brethren to articles of faith of their own composing, explanations of scripture of their own inventions, and require articles to be believed as necessary to salvation, not mentioned to be so in the scripture. This same principle prevailed even in the apostles age, when certain wicked men, of the jewish converts, went about to disturb the peace of the heathen converted christians, declaring, that unless they were circumcised, and observed the law of Moses, they could not be saved. But what saith St. Paul of such men? ** There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which is preached of me is not after man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again; if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.* Now is not every human composition, or explanation of any article or point of faith, another doctrine or gospel than what was de-

* Epist. Gal. i. 7. 10, 11, 12. 8, 9.

livered by the unerring spirit of truth ; and do not those who impose such compositions and explanations as articles of faith, pervert the gospel of Christ, and exercise dominion over the faith of their brethren ; and by such means have introduced into the christian church all those corrupt doctrines which are a reproach to christianity, and make its divine original to be called in question.

The clergy have, and may write many thousand volumes more against infidels and deists, but they themselves have been, and are the productive cause of infidelity and deism, by their imposing human inventions and explanations as the word of God ; and so long as they continue that wicked practice, all they write can be of no service to true christianity.

However that be, an eminent polemic writer hath (undoubtedly with a view to promote the genuine religion of Christ) wrote a large volume to prove the great advantage the christian religion hath received by the servants of it having entered into an alliance with the civil powers. If by the christian religion the author means the servants of that religion, he is most certainly in the right ; for though the greatest part of the clergy are with us rather meanly provided for, yet to some of them great and mighty advantages have accrued from the mentioned alliance, such as lordships, pomp, pride and wealth ; and what is as, or more, pleasing, a power to lord it over their brethren, and by the aid of the civil power have exercised all those tyrannic persecutions mentioned in history. It is true the christian rulers or bishops, even before the above alliance took place, shewed strong tendencies to a persecuting spirit ; but those good men had at

that time no other power or weapon but words, and could only throw curses at one anothers heads, and most heartily assigned one another over to the devil and eternal damnation, when they differed in opinion one from the other, as to the true sense of some point of faith in debate betwixt them; each party insisting their own explanation to be the true word of God: But as soon as the blessed union between the clergy and the civil power took place, the majority of four or five hundred christian bishops, ministers of the peaceful religion of Jesus Christ, assembled in council, presumed to prescribe and dictate to the christian world the form and particulars of their faith, and termed all those who had the virtue to oppose their explanations and inventions from being accepted as the word of God, incorrigible heretics, and delivered them over to be punished by the civil power, which subverted all true religion, and substituted in its place hypocrisy and the popish religion. For the popes of Rome and their priests perfectly understood the advantage arising to them from an alliance with the civil power or state; and these crafty worldly men, dexterously improved this alliance to the increase of their wealth and power, and made use of the civil magistrate as a tool in their hands, to extirpate all heretical opposers by sword and fire. Nay, in short the civil power is the foundation and strength of popery, and every false religion which owes its existence to the aid of that power: For should the civil magistrates ever open their eyes, and see how instrumental they have been in the hands of wicked priests to destroy their subjects, and force their consciences; and withdraw their aid; the delusions, witchcraft and fascinations of popery would vanish, and reason and true religion take its place.

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But how is it possible that true religion can exist, where the civil power uses compulsory methods to force assent to particular systems of human composition and inventions. Wherefore, that the true christian religion, or virtue, truth and real piety, ever received any advantage or benefit by the ministers of the christian religion's connexion with the state or civil power is highly improbable. Doth not true religion consist in an inward conviction of the mind of man, that the point of doctrine proposed for his assent, is truly the will and command of God? Does not our Lord Jesus Christ suppose every man possessed of such faculties as enables him to distinguish and judge whether the doctrine proposed to him be true or false. * *He declared to the Jews, that the doctrine he preached was not his, but of him that sent him; and that if any man would do his will, he shall know by the doctrine whether it be of God.* † *Yea, and why of yourselves judge ye not what is right?* Thus the power implanted in man to judge for himself in religious matters, renders him accountable to God for his faith; and it was the abuse the Jews made of their reasonable faculties, in not judging rightly concerning the doctrine he taught, which drew such severe reproofs on them for their unbelief.

Nevertheless, our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all thoughts lay open, and unto whom all judgment was committed, did not use any coercive power, or inflict any bodily disease or punishment to remove the obduracy of the Jews, or force the assent of their minds to acknowledge the truth of his doctrine: Ought not the servants therefore to be

* St. John, vii. 16, 17.

† St. John, xii. 47.

ashamed of assuming a power which their Master and his apostles avoided, of exercising dominion over those unto whom the christian religion was preached, but left them entirely to their free choice. * *And St. Peter advises the christian clergy to feed the flock of God among them, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint, nor for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.* And St. Paul saith, † *Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy, for by faith you stand. For, ‡ Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth; yea he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. But why dost thou judge thy brethren? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? For we shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ; so then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.* From these scriptural proofs it is indisputably evident, that every man hath an undoubted right to judge for himself in matters of faith; and that he is accountable on that head to no power on earth, but to God only. Wherefore neither the christian clergy, who are his brethren, nor the civil power, either jointly or separately, have any legal right to exercise dominion over his faith: Yet so it is, that when under the emperor Constantine, the civil power became christian, and took the servants of that religion under its power and protection, the latter immediately formed a scheme to exercise dominion over the faith of their brethren; and having persuaded the emperor to call a council of

* Ep. of Peter, v. 22.

† 2 Ep. to Cor. i. 24.

‡ Ep. to Romans, xiv. 4, 5. 10. 12.

priests,

priests, the majority of those assembled in council drew up articles of faith, and having fixed to those articles their own inventions and explanations, they imposed those articles, with their inventions and explanations, on their brethren, as the word of God; and anathematized or cursed all those under the name of heretics, that could not accept or believe such their inventions and explanations to be the word of God: And having now the aid of the civil power, they, by banishment, corporal punishment, and at last by sword and fire, silenced all heretics, and deterred the greatest part of the christian world to profess, at least with their lips, their catholic faith; not daring to examine the truth of those doctrines they pretended to believe; but having withdrawn their obedience to their true Lord Jesus Christ, and resigned their understandings, are led like brute beasts, at the will of their masters the popes and priests, into the belief of every doctrine or invention they are pleased to impose: So that from the first general council held at Nice, in Bythinia, when clods of earth took on themselves to define the essence of their Creator, until the last council held at Trent, when vile dust and ashes declared a power in themselves to turn a piece of bread into God, and with their teeth devour their god whenever they please, those men have been instruments, in the hands of satan, to pervert the real christian religion; and under that name have impudently imposed another gospel, not preached by our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles, but of their own inventions; and by their tyrannic and persecuting spirit, have shewed themselves to be the genuine offspring of their father the devil. † *He was a murderer from the beginning, and*

† St. John, viii. 44.

abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it. † And evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. ‡ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but will turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. § And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. || Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. Which leads to

† 2d Timothy, iii. 13.
§ 2d Epist. Peter, ii. 2.

‡ Timothy, iv. 3, 4.
|| Epist. Heb. ii. 1.

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PROPOSITION II.

That the heads, or leading men in the Reformation, deviating from the principles they at first laid down as the foundation of the Reformation; namely, that the scriptures ought to be the sole rule and guide to every christian's faith; and returning to the anticristian principle of the romish church, in imposing human inventions and explanations as the word of God, obstructed the Reformation, and hitherto prevents its progress.

THE corruption of the christian religion, by a profane mixture of human inventions and explanations of superstitious and designing men, was in the fifteenth century arrived to such a height, as to be utterly destitute of any thing that could attract the esteem of the truly virtuous and judicious part of mankind; and all those who were studious to acquire a just notion of the genuine principles of christianity, and to model their lives and manners after the precepts and example of the divine promulgator of that religion, had much difficulty in escaping being stigmatized as heretics. Such an enormous perversion of true religion was deplored and lamented by many wise and good men, who all endeavoured, though in different ways, to stop the torrent of superstition, and to reform a corrupt religion.

But the chief of the clergy, persuaded that their honours, influence and riches, would lessen in proportion to the increase of knowledge among the people,

people, and would receive inexpressible detriment from the downfal of superstition and falsehood, opposed with all their might every thing that had the remotest tendency to a Reformation: But the rapacious avarice of the popes, who to fill their treasury, extended the beneficial trade carried on by the rulers of the church, the bishops, in accepting pecuniary fines for the remission of transgressions, and which by the pope's sales-men were called indulgences, or pardons for all the sins a man had, or might commit, and to free him from all punishment hereafter; I say this public sale of pardons, though it had been the practice of every provincial bishop, yet now gave high offence to some of the clergy of that communion; and the right of that infallible head, for selling such pardons, became questioned; and one inquiry begetting another, it became the foundation of a Reformation; though indeed it was begun a century before, by our countryman doctor Wiccliff, who firmly opposed most of the chief doctrines of the romish church; but being persecuted by the ruling powers of England, and having no one to aid him in the forwarding a Reformation, he was under a necessity to drop his design; which was reassumed in the fifteenth century by Luther, Melancton, Zwingel and Calvin, and others, who became the chief leaders in the Reformation, and who laid its foundation on the two following maxims.

First, That there is no more than one sense annexed to the holy scriptures, and that they are in all matters essential to salvation, so plain, and so easy to be thoroughly understood, that their signification may be learned by every person of com-

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mon sense, without the aid of an expositor, according to St. Paul. * *But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

And the other is, That christians are accountable to God alone for their religious sentiments, and that no individual can be justly punished by the magistrate for his erroneous opinions, while he conducts himself like a virtuous and obedient subject.

Such were the maxims and principles of the Reformation, agreeable to christian liberty and the result of good sense; and had the chief leaders in the Reformation continued stedfastly to adhere to those principles, the christian religion would have been freed from those corrupt doctrines which prevents the progress of a thorough Reformation, and we should ere now have returned to the true christian religion; and they might have said with St. Paul, † *We are not as many, who corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ. ‡ Having renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by the manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*

But alas! they soon deviated from the principles by them laid down, and returned to that of the

* Epist. to Romans, x. 8, 9.

† 2 Ep. Corin. ii. 17.

‡ 2 Ep. Corin. iv. 2.

romish church, in imposing human inventions and explanations on their brethrens conscience, to be believed as the true sense of the word of God. Thus Doctor Martin Luther assumed to himself a power to explain how, and in what manner, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was present in the sacrament, and how received by the communicants; and though his explanation was attended with as many gross absurdities as transubstantiation, and gave great and just offence to many, yet he persisted in imposing his explanation as an article of faith. And in like manner, the princes who separated themselves from the romish religion, and embraced the Reformation, retained the antichristian power of the popes, to exercise dominion over their subjects in matters of faith: And the elector of Saxony, and other princes, employed Luther and others of the clergy, in 1529, to draw up confessions of faith, which produced the articles of Torgaw, about seventeen in number, and out of which the famous confession of Augsburg was composed: and though many conscientious men made many objections to the acceptance of the above confession, as inconsistent with the principles of the Reformation, and the express doctrine of the christian religion, which in matters of faith allows every christian to judge for himself; and that the many human inventions and explanations which abounded in those articles, nearly resembled those imposed by the romish church; yet the civil power, Augustus elector of Saxony interposing, assembled at Dresden in 1571, a number of Saxon divines, and commanded them to adopt his opinion, which was that of Luther, in relation to the presence of the real body and blood of Jesus Christ in the sacrament. And as many refused

refused to receive the above opinion as an article of faith, the said elector convened another assembly of divines in 1574, at Torgaw; and having the majority of those assembled divines on his side, he imprisoned and banished all those who differed from him in opinion; and, by the force of secular arms, forced many to change their sentiments to his. But as this arbitrary proceeding gave great uneasiness, an agreement was proposed, to restore unity and peace to the reformed church; and accordingly six doctors met at Torgaw, and composed a form of faith according to their own fancies and opinions; which form was reviewed by some others at Berg, and then published, under the name of a concord, and was to be received as an explanation, and as a part of the Augsburg confession: And in this concord the ministers of the reformed church breathed the same persecuting spirit with the romish, branding with the name of heretics, and excluding from the communion of the church, all christians of all nations, who would not subscribe their belief to the system of doctrine drawn up by those pragmatistical and self-sufficient conceited doctors. Henceforth, instead of unity and peace, there arose the most violent contest and dissention; and all further reformation was obstructed, and the leaders of the Reformation divided into two parties, one under Luther, and the other under Zuingel and Calvin, and have continued so to this day. Nevertheless, these latter men adhere to the same wicked principle, of imposing their opinions and explanations as the word of God; and not regarding St. Paul's admonition, to ** avoid foolish questions, which gender strife, they*

* 2 Epist. Tim. ii. 23.

presumed to explain the eternal decrees of the supreme Being, under the names of predestination and justification, with regard to man's eternal salvation and damnation. And as those men have had the dexterity to engage the civil powers of their respective states to enact their opinions, as the law of that state, it hath confirmed those corrupt doctrines which at present subsist in the reformed christian religion, and thus prevented all further progress towards a Reformation; especially as the ruling powers of the church, though they have enjoyed the advantage of a clearer light and information, continue the same aversion to reform, with perhaps the same apprehensions, that their popish brethren entertained, of its diminishing their power, dignity, and worldly establishments; or else it is impossible but they must see the great detriment the christian religion hath, and doth receive, from the establishing the opinions and explanations of men as the word of God. Ah! what an honour would it be to this nation, which enjoys more freedom and civil liberty than any other nation upon earth, would the rulers of the English church employ their great talents, learning and abilities, in freeing themselves, and their brethren, from the slavery of submitting to the arbitrary opinions of other men; a slavery so much the more infamous, as it is a subjection of the mind, and rendering useless the noblest faculty of human nature. * *Seeing we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.* And as it were despising that liberty wherewith the Son of God hath made us free, in permitting every man to think and judge for himself, in points of

* 1 Epistle St. John, v. 20.

faith,

faith, and that in religious matters he is accountable to no power on earth, but to his heavenly Master; for every point of faith, which is not the result of a man's own choice or judgment, may be a false doctrine; and another man's faith, or opinion, can with no propriety be said to be mine, unless such faith and opinion hath been impartially, and without any view to worldly interest, examined, and after such examination hath the conviction of ones own mind.

It is amazing therefore, that neither the names nor number of those ecclesiastical tyrants, who drew the thirty nine articles, are with any certainty handed down to posterity. Those men, though they had a right to differ in opinion from their forefathers, and the then established church, and most justly condemned them for having corrupted the christian religion by their explanations, inventions and fictions, yet though they took the liberty to change their opinions in many points, from the old accustomed way of thinking, they have, by the aid of the civil power, got their opinions and fancies enacted into a law, and endeavoured to deprive their successors from thinking and judging for themselves: Though, whoever reads the thirty-nine articles with any attention, and observes in what obscure, unintelligible, unmeaning, and pompous expressions, many of them are cloathed, cannot avoid thinking, that those men, who drew those articles, did not understand them themselves, much less had considered the many absurd and unjust consequences they were liable to; however, it had much redounded to their integrity and honour, as well as to the ease of the scruples of many a good christian, if they had pointed

pointed out in which of the gospels, or epistles, containing the christian revelation, they had found the Athanasian explanation of the Trinity.

When the romish clergy are charged with having grossly corrupted the christian religion, by adulterating the word of God, by their inventions and explanations, they refuge themselves, under the pretence of their infallible head, the pope, who being under the immediate guidance of the holy spirit of truth, which prevents his imposing any erroneous points of faith.

But though those men who drew the thirty-nine articles, have not had the confidence to leave any declaration that they were under the direction of the spirit of truth, yet they have had the effrontery to fix their fancies, opinions and explanations, to be received as an everlasting rule, in matters of faith, by their successors, who are to think and believe just as those men were pleased to prescribe and dictate, under the sanction of a law, enacted by the civil power.

The hypocritical pretext, in requiring subscriptions from the ministers of the christian religion, to religious systems of human inventions and explanations, is an ardent zeal for the welfare of religion, and an anxious concern, lest devouring heretics should get footing among the flock of Christ. But though the apostles, who were endowed with the holy spirit, might distinguish who were truly heretics, yet when the assistance of the holy spirit was withdrawn, no man, or body of men, could, or can know, who are heretics. This knowledge belongs to God alone, unto whom the thoughts of
all

all men lie open, and their motives, views and designs, in their religious profession, perfectly known; yet the servants of the christian religion have presumed to take the judgment out of their Master's hand, and to be judges themselves. They would not allow their brethren to form their own judgment from scripture, but assumed a power to declare what ought to be believed by others; and stigmatized all those who had the courage to place the authority of scripture above that of men, with the name of heretics; and this senseless and scandalous practice of general councils, and ancient fathers is still made use of, and those mens scandals retained to this day. But however this be, the method proposed, in requiring subscriptions to keep out heretics, becomes the very means to bring them in; as such men may be supposed not to have in view the service of religion, but preferments, attended with worldly establishments. How much more rational, therefore, would it be in those men, who think they have the right faith, or are orthodox in all points of faith, not to impose their faith, or orthodoxy, on their brethren. But follow St. Paul's advice: * *Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth.* † *Let us not therefore judge one another; but judge this rather that no man put a stumbling block, or occasion of falling, in his brothers way.* This admonition particularly concern those who have drawn rules or systems of faith, and insist on imposing such rules by way of subscriptions.

* Epistle to the Romans, xiv. 22.

† Epistle to the Romans, xiv. 13.

Is not the explanation of the Athanasian creed a stumbling block, or an occasion of falling, put in a brother's way?

Who can, without sensible concern, behold such an explanation made use of, and imposed as an essential part of christian faith; and to see it, by the obstinacy of the church governors, in not properly representing it to the civil power, continued as part of the public service? To hear an ignorant multitude repeat, in the presence of God, and as an act of divine worship, a human invention, and explanation of a creed they neither do, nor can understand; and to be encouraged by their ministers, to pronounce damnation on all those brethren who cannot believe the said invention, or explanation, to be the word of God, is surely as dangerous and momentous an error as can exist in any christian church.

Do we plume ourselves on being a reformed church, when our public office is a seduction to an uncharitable persecuting spirit? In what a detestable light must subscriptions to human inventions and explanations, in matters of faith, appear to a conscientious good man? It confirms all falsehood, prevents all inquiry after truth, stops all further reformation, and is the chief support of the romish religion; and which receives additional strength from the late publications of some of our eminent Doctors, who have wrote by way of answer to the Confessional, a defence of a right in protestant churches to require subscriptions to human inventions and explanations in matters of faith, though evidently destructive of all true religion.

But * they are those who justify themselves before men; but God knoweth their hearts: For that which is highly esteemed among men, is an abomination in the sight of God. And those who defend the rotten part of the Reformation, human authority in matters of christian faith, or human establishments, would do well to consider how far their case is similar to the reproof of the prophet Ezekiel to the Jewish false prophets. † Because they have seduced my people, saying peace, when there was no peace; and one built up a wall, (the alliance of church and state, by the grand Orthodoxical Architect) and lo others daubed it with untempered mortar: Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall. Lo when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it? Therefore thus saith the Lord, so will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them who have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it. For so long as the antichristian principle of imposing subscriptions to human inventions and explanations, as the word of God, and exercising dominion over the faith of our brethren, be retained by the clergy of the reformed church, they may fill all Europe with volumes against the corruption of the romish church; yet they in fact justify her, and she will, as two hundred years experience hath verified, gain, while the Reformation loses ground. Hence the hopes and struggle to obtain a public exercise of the Ro-

* St. Luke, xvi. 15.

† Ezekiel, xiii. 10.

mish religion, and so promote a connection with those men who build on her foundation. Ah! why do those men halt between two opinions, if the Romish church hath not, by her inventions, human explanations and fictions, corrupted the word of God, and imposed such her corruptions, as articles of faith, on the Christian church, why a separation? and if she hath, why a defence of the foundation of all her corruptions, a power in the clergy to exercise dominion over the consciences of their brethren? May those who act the mongrel part, Protestants by profession, and Papists in principle, reflect on the reproof and advice our Lord Jesus Christ sent by his servant John to the church of Laodicea: * *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth: Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing: And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke, and chasten: Be zealous therefore, and repent.* Let us therefore return, and continue stedfast to the first principles of the Reformation, and good sense, that the scriptures ought to be the only rule and guide, to every man to form his faith; for as every man is to give an account of himself before God, so on the principles of justice and equity, he must have an indisputable right to judge for himself in reli-

* St. John's Revelation, iii. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19.

gious matters, or else he cannot be accountable for himself; and the word of God and truth become chargeable with a falsehood. This consideration alone is sufficient to shew the falsehood of every pretence to a scriptural right of imposing other mens faith, by way of subscriptions, on their brethren: And if this antichristian claim was only once withdrawn, the Christian religion would appear in its own native beauty and genuine purity, and approve itself to every man's understanding, as the most amiable and benevolent religion ever made known to mankind.

Whereas, so long as men dare to continue to adulterate the word of God, by mixing it with their own inventions and explanations, and impose such as the word of God, it must needs happen that offences will come, and prove a stumbling block, or occasion of falling, in a brother's way: But woe to those by whom such offences do come, or who continue such offences, notwithstanding the many intreaties to the church governors, that they would at least use their endeavours to have them removed out of the Christian reformed church; which brings me to

P R O P O S I T I O N III.

That the prophecies relative to the corruptions of the Christian church and the Man of Sin, or Antichrist, are fulfilled in the Romish religion and the popes of Rome.

THAT great corruptions should happen in the Christian church, is expressly foretold by the apostles, under the character of the Man of Sin, or Antichrist, and who was to exist in the Christian church for a long space of time, and introduce a religion quite opposite to that published by Jesus Christ and his apostles.

Now whoever will, with a proper attention, examine the Romish religion, must in truth confess, that the principles of that religion is the very reverse of the true Christian religion; and that the particulars relating to the said corruption, notwithstanding St. Paul's advice to the Christian church, * *Not to be as children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lay in wait to deceive,* is fulfilled in a most astonishing manner: For the then ruling or civil power, the emperors Philipicus, Bardanus, Leo, and his son Constantine, deeply affected with the sharp railleries and serious reproaches, which the superstitious attachment to the worship of images, had drawn on the Christians, from the Jews and Saracens, were deter-

* Epist. Eph. iv. 14.

mined,

mined, by the most vigorous proceeding, to root out at once this growing evil ; and for that purpose issued out several laws, especially one in 726, by which it was ordered, not only that the worship of images should be abrogated and relinquished, but that also all the images, except that of Christ's crucifixion, should be removed out of the churches : But now it began to appear, that the Man of Sin, or Antichrist, had not only got a footing in the Christian church, but had already possessed himself of a considerable authority, having the impudence of opposing such laws as were made for preserving the Christian religion in its purity ; and Gregory the first and second, popes of Rome, not only instigated the priests and monks, who had artfully rendered idolatry, or the worship of images, a source of opulence to their churches and cloisters, to stir up the frantic enthusiasm of an ignorant superstitious people, to regard the emperors on account of their having issued laws against the worshipping of images, as apostates, and to consider themselves as freed from the oath of allegiance, and from all obedience to their lawful sovereign. And when pope Gregory the first observed, that the ignorant and superstitious multitude were on his side, and very ardent for the support of idolatry, it emboldened him to solicit for a repeal of the laws against image worship ; and on a refusal by the emperor, the pope, without hesitation, declared him unworthy of the name and privilege of a Christian, and thus excommunicated, or excluded him the communion of the church : And having thus blown the trumpet of rebellion, the Romans, and the other Italian provinces that were subject to the emperor, lifted under the pope's banner, violated their allegiance, rose in arms, and banished and massa-

cred all the emperor's deputies and officers; so that the violent opposition made to the emperor's laws against idolatry by the popes, divided the christian church into two desperate factions, and produced nothing but mutual invectives, crimes, and assassinations; instances of the great corruption which already prevailed in the Christian religion, and which corruptions were greatly multiplied, when the popes, notwithstanding the utmost efforts of the emperors, prevailed in their rebellion, and occasioned the loss of the Italian dominions to the emperors, together with the heathen idolatrous city of Rome, and which became the property of the popes of Rome, according to the prophecy, that it should be the residence of the Man of Sin, or Antichrist.

Here then St. Paul's declaration to the Theffalonians, and advice to the Collossians, is fulfilled. ** Let no man deceive you, by any means: For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition.*

Now, most certainly, there cannot be a greater falling away from the Christian religion, than the introduction of idolatry. *Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels; intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.* But not only the worship of angels, but also the bones of dead men and women are worshiped and prayed to under the name of holy relicks, by the

* Epist. to the Theff. ii. 3.

votaries of the Romish religion; for pope Adrian, in 786, summoned a council of his bishops, at Nice, in Bithinia, where all the imperial laws against idolatry were reversed and abrogated, the worship of images restored, and severe punishments denounced against such as maintained that God was the only object of religious adoration. Is not this a sufficient demonstration that the Man of Sin reigned in the Christian church, with sovereign sway, having, according to St. Paul's prediction, * *Opposed and exalted himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*; having ordered divine worship to be paid to images, and the carcases of dead men and women. And pope Leo the tenth published a bull, or law, commanding the christian world to acknowledge his power of delivering from all punishment due to sin and transgression of every kind. And pope Innocent the third claimed the empire of the whole world: In Asia and Europe he disposed of crowns, with the most wanton ambition; in Asia he gave a king to the Armenians; in Europe he conferred the regality on Primislaus, duke of Bohemia, and on Johannicus, duke of Bulgaria and Walachia, whilst with his own hand he crowned Peter the second king of Arragan; and pope Paul the fifth called himself the monarch of Christendom, the supporter of papal omnipotence, and vice-god. Can such blasphemies be uttered by any but Antichrist, or the Man of Sin? † *Even him, whose coming is after the working of satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of un-*

* Second Epist. to Thes. ii. 4.

† Second Epist. to 1 hes. ii. 9, 10, 11, 12.

righteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved? And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

* And again, the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their consciences seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and to abstain from meats. Do not the religious orders, both of men and women, in the Popish communion, and their pretended lent, by abstaining from meats, bear witness to the above quotation, and their pretended miracles and lying wonders?

The presumptive power the priests declare in themselves, of turning a piece of bread into God; the taking away from the laity the cup in the communion, contrary to the express institution of our Saviour; auricular confession, and a power assumed in the priests to forgive sins, penance, extreme unction, works of supererogation, purgatory, the explanation of St. Athanasian's creed, with many others, Are they not doctrines founded on falsehoods, or on human inventions and explanations, and fulfilled the prophetic predictions, that the Christian church would depart from the true faith, and hath given heed to seducing spirits? And as the popes of Rome, in conjunction with their bishops, assembled in council, have imposed all the recited doctrines on the Christian church, as the

* Epist. Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3.

commands of God, so have they also introduced the doctrines of devils, by turning the amiable and benevolent religion of Jesus Christ, which breatheth peace on earth, and good will towards men, into the religion of satan, which teaches hatred, wrath, strife, animosity, malice, and persecution. * *Our Lord Jesus Christ declared, that he was not come to destroy, but to save men's lives.*

But Antichrist, or the Man of Sin, the popes of Rome, and their priests, have employed every wicked invention and device to destroy men's lives; namely all those who oppose their false doctrines, and received not the mark of the beast, and on that account were termed heretics. Thus the council of Constance assembled in 1414, ordered John Hufs, and Jerome of Prague, notwithstanding they had the emperor's safe conduct, to be burnt alive; and ordered the bones of John Wickliff, which had rested about fifty years, to be dug up out of his grave, and, together with his writings, to be committed to the flames, and also declared it as an article of Christian doctrine, that no faith is to be kept with heretics. Pope Innocent the third solicited Philip Augustus, king of France, his nobles, and the leading men of that nation, to extirpate all whom he thought proper to call heretics; and accordingly sent Reynard, a Cistercian monk, Pierre Decastelnaw, archdeacon of Maquilon, with Dominic, founder of the order of preachers, as his legates, or captains, in the south of France, to extirpate heresy, in all its various forms and modifications. These spiritual champions were distinguished by the name of inquisitors, and had power

* St. Luke, ix. 56.

given them to inflict capital punishments on such of the heretics who, on account of the corruption of the Romish church, had separated themselves from her communion, and of which they destroyed nigh 50,000; and the popes were so sensible of the services of those barbarous men, in having destroyed so many thousands of heretics, that they established missionaries of the like nature, in other kingdoms and provinces, and so became the foundation of that execrable court, the inquisition, which shews what enormous cruelties christian, or rather diabolical priests, are capable of exercising; and persuaded the kings and princes of the earth, particularly the emperor Frederic the second, to enact the most cruel and iniquitous laws, and to commit to the flames, by the ministry of public justice, all those who are pronounced heretics. Let these few instances, out of innumerable others, as this small treatise can admit of no more, suffice to shew how truly and justly the prophecy relative to the corruption of the Christian religion, and the Man of Sin, or Antichrist, are fulfilled in the Romish religion and the popes of Rome: And thus proves an undeniable evidence of the truth, and divinity of the Christian religion. * *Wherefore I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies; and by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple. † Be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men; and if men of understanding, let us not*

* Epist. Rom. xvi. 17, 18.

† First Epist. Cor. xiv. 20.

remain careless and indolent in the cause of a further Reformation, by retaining any of the corrupt doctrines of the Romish religion, but with speed and alacrity return to the first principles of the Reformation, grounded on the genuine and pure spirit of the true Christian religion, * *in all goodness, righteousness and truth.*

For the dread of Popery seems almost lost amongst us; the vilest tenets of it are openly asserted and maintained; men are taught to play with oaths, and no remedy is applied; those whose duty and business it ought to have been, and is, have had, and still have, their time and thoughts so fully engaged, in supporting ecclesiastical tyranny, hunting after preferments, and enriching themselves, that the great evil of Popery hath been suffered to go on, and still goes on; it hath been continually increasing, and daily increases. But I hope, at last, that those entrusted with the administration, laying aside, for a while, their own private quarrels, who shall plunder most an impoverished exhausted nation, will take the alarm of the common enemy, and will think their own safety, and the safety of his Majesty, and his people, are highly concerned, to remove a mischief which is levelled at all their and our happiness. If this be not done, any one, without much skill in politicks, may safely affirm, that our present establishment cannot long subsist.

A free government must subsist on the affections of the people; and if those affections be perpetually debauched, its duration cannot be long. The Roman catholics, by a public demand for a toleration,

* Ephesian, v. 9.

give you to understand their strength; and what use will be made we may easily judge, by what use ever hath been made of it. And it is certainly well worth the time and thoughts of those in public authority, and of all men who wish well to their country, their king and themselves, seriously to reflect upon the dangers which now threaten us, and provide against the evil before it is too late, and the mischief be accomplished.

A N

A D D R E S S

To the Gentlemen born in this free Nation,
and who profess the Romish Religion.

Gentlemen,

YOU who are born to enjoy religious, as well as civil liberty, how can you submit to have a religion imposed on you, founded on the vilest principles of slavery; a religion whose chief points of doctrine were framed by the servants or priests of that religion, to invest themselves with sovereign sway over those who appointed them, to offer up public praise and thanksgiving to God the father, through his son Jesus Christ; and who, by cunning devised fables, have cheated and defrauded their benefactors of their property, and converted the Christian religion into a trade and traffic, to enrich themselves? What confidence can be put in a set of men, whose power and riches depend on their deceiving you? But you are free men, and many of you men of reason and spirit.

Awaken your spirit, exert your reason, and assert your freedom. You may, in this nation, without fear of being put into the inquisition, examine the chief points of your religion, and their tendency;

dency; and you will find them chiefly center in the benefit of the priests. Can you avoid suspecting some unfair practices in a religion, which gives such great and mighty advantages to the priests, and enslaves the rest of mankind to their will and dominion? Is such a religion of divine, or of human institution? What think ye? Do not you see sufficient reason why your priests will not allow you to think for yourselves, or permit you to read the scriptures, lest you should discover that the religion they impose on you is not the religion preached by Jesus Christ and his apostles, but a religion of their own composing, which hath highly exalted the servants above their Lord, and adapted every article of Christian doctrine, to aggrandize or enrich themselves; or else it would have been their interest to have recommended the scriptures to your serious perusal and examination, as in them are contained the conditions of eternal happiness; whereas their forbidding you to read them, sufficiently proves them self condemned; and sensible, that even in the manner they have worded, wrested, and explained, some scripture expressions, it will not support many of their most gainful and absurd doctrines, imposed on you as articles of christian faith. For really the powers claimed by your priests are of such an amazing extensive nature, that, if true, renders all religion useless, and fixes the future eternal happiness in their disposal, instead of God's, whose name they blasphemously use, whilst they virtually exercise his power. They grant licence or indulgence to commit whatever crimes a man's pride, lust, or tyranny, prompts him to do. They forgive the most notorious and profligate crimes, even as one of your priests, father Tezel, expressed himself, the ravishing of the mother of God. But you

you ought to be well assured, that when your father confessor pronounces your absolution, that it is really and truly his intention to absolve you of all your sins; seeing the bishops and priests assembled in council at Trent, suppose that a priest may pronounce an absolution in words to his penitent, and yet never intend to absolve him: Those wicked men undoubtedly had practised such diabolical deceit, or else how could such an accursed thought ever have entered into their heads, that a priest, sent for to absolve a man of his sins, sports with the poor wretched man's salvation, pronounces words of absolution, but never intended to absolve him, so he dies in his sins, and is damned?

Consider, oh! consider, gentlemen, what you are about, or adoin, when you put your confidence in such perfidious men. Had you not better apply yourselves, where only you ought, to God, beseeching him that he would, for the sake of his Son Jesus Christ, forgive you all your transgressions and sins? He knows your hearts, and all the sincerity of your repentance, which no priest can know; and consequently, let his intention be what it may, cannot absolve you: But God, to whom your hearts or intentions are known, will not deal deceitfully with you, but on your sincere repentance, you may be assured of certain forgiveness and absolution. In like manner, is it not more noble, sure and certain, to address your petitions and prayers to God the Father, through Jesus Christ the only appointed Mediator and Intercessor? He certainly will hear and accept your prayers and petitions; but what certainty have you that those unto whom your priests direct you to offer up your prayers and petitions, are able to hear or in-

terceed for you? seeing our Lord Jesus Christ saith, that * *at the day of judgment he will separate the good from the bad, and assign each their proper place*; wherefore till that day no one can tell who are saints, or who are to be admitted in heaven. But supposing, that notwithstanding our Lord's express declaration, some will immediately be admitted in heaven on death, yet even then such persons could neither know your thoughts nor hear your prayers, unless endowed with the divine attributes of omniscience and omnipresence, and which would render them equal with God; a notion which none but madmen can believe. Besides, had our Lord Jesus Christ been commissioned by his Father (seeing he declared that the doctrine he preached was not his, but his Father's) to teach mankind that they should address their prayers to any other being but his heavenly Father, his God and our God, he would have left plain and clear directions as to those other beings unto whom we ought to address ourselves. Suppose he intended that his mother Mary, according to the flesh, should after her decease have supplications and prayers made to her, would he and his apostles not have left some clear directions concerning her? Most certainly they would; and their not having done so, is an undeniable proof, that we ought to offer up our prayers and supplications to no other being, according to the express command of our Lord Jesus Christ, but to God only; and that every prayer and supplication to any other being is superstitious and gross idolatry. And which brings to mind another chief doctrine of your religion, namely Transubstantiation. Suppose a priest walked with you in a garden, and

* St. Matthew, xv. 31, 32, 33.

coming to a vine stopped, and told you that he could convert, or transubstantiate that vine into the very crucified body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and its branches into the living bodies of the apostles; and repeating over the vine the words spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ to his apostles, * *I am the vine, ye are the branches*, insist that the vine is converted into the very crucified body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and its branches into the living bodies of the apostles, and that you should fall down and worship the vine, as your God and Saviour, and reverence the branches as the apostles, would you not conclude that the priest was raving mad, and hasten him with the utmost expedition to Bedlam? Yet what difference is there between this doctrine, and your doctrine of the mass? Only that the bread and wafers, after it be converted into God, and the very crucified body of our Lord Jesus Christ, being kept for some time, moulders away, sees corruption, or is eaten by the worms; whereas one of the prophetic declarations concerning the true Messiah, whom we believe to be our Lord Jesus Christ, is that even his mortal body should see no corruption. But your priests, pretending to turn pieces of bread and wafers into the very crucified body of Jesus Christ, and which body visibly ascended in heaven, and is highly exalted at the right hand of his heavenly Father, hath (according to your priests doctrine) his crucified immortal body drawn from heaven, to be enveloped in pieces of bread or wafers, that under that form his crucified immortal body may see corruption. Oh! astonishing absurdity, and matchless impudence, in your priests, to persist in this enlightned age, to impose

* St. John's Gospel, xv. 5.

as an article of Christian faith, a doctrine which shocks and fills every considerate sensible Christian's breast with abhorrence, as it makes a game of, and sports with the crucified body of our Lord Jesus Christ; representing it to be in heaven, and at the same time, under the form of pieces of bread or wafers, in a million of different places on earth, that it is eaten, and corrupts, and still remains eternally in heaven. But nevertheless, at the call of every priest, on repeating certain words, to come out of heaven and enter into pieces of bread or wafers, to be sold under the appellation of the mass. Consider, gentlemen, whether human art and imagination could have invented a doctrine more abominable, blasphemous and false, only to support the great importance, pride and gain of your priests. But it is eternally true, that such as is the nature of the religion, such will be the nature and temper of the people; and that their whole integrity and virtue, or all their corruptions and baseness, arise from that single source. Where religion is most deformed, as religion ever is, when supported by lies, craft and force; there all examination is most strictly forbid and discouraged, which is the case with your religion, in those nations where it is profest. But you, gentlemen, ought to thank God, that you are born in a nation where your priests can exercise no authority over you, where you may examine with freedom, and please to remember, that God will expect from you an account, according to the light afforded you. Do not verify in yourselves what our Lord Jesus Christ said to the Jews; ** And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness*

* Gospel St. John, iii. 19, 20, 21.

rather

rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. Or what the prophet Jeremiah said to the same people : * Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding, which have eyes and see not ; which have ears and hear not : a wonderful and horrid thing is committed in the land. The prophets prophecy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so ; and what will ye do in the end thereof ? † To whom shall I speak, and give warning that they may hear ? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken. Behold, the word of the Lord (or the scriptures) is to them a reproach, and they have no delight in it. ‡ Ye trust in lying words (or doctrines) that cannot profit.

* Jeremiah, v. 21, 22, 23.

† Jeremiah, vi. 10.

‡ Jeremiah, vii. 8.

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10. 11. 1941. 10. 11. 1941. 10. 11. 1941.

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